



# Oregon

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August 30, 2012

Mayor Christine Lundberg  
City of Springfield  
225 Fifth Street  
Springfield, OR 97477



RE: Letter to ODFW Commission Members presented August 3, 2012

Dear Mayor Lundberg:

On August 3, 2012, Springfield City Councilor Joe Pishioneri delivered a letter to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, signed by you and the Springfield City Council, objecting to a proposed angling regulation change for the lower McKenzie River. This proposal (identified as 31S in the current angling regulation process) effectively eliminates bait from the trout fishery from Hayden Bridge to Hendricks Bridge by generally defaulting to Willamette Zone Regulations (catch and release wild trout, use of lures and flies only). Bait use is currently allowed on this reach. We are proposing to continue providing the opportunity to harvest hatchery rainbow trout originating from upstream stockings, as well as maintain a restricted bait season for anglers targeting salmon and steelhead in the peak of the season. With this letter I hope to address some of the issues raised in your letter, as well as provide some of the rationale behind this proposal.

For the past 22 years I have been the District Biologist for the area that includes the McKenzie River and I have the responsibility to implement the policies and goals of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). We utilize our Native Fish Conservation Policy and subbasin fish management plans to guide species conservation objectives. We make our decisions for actions needed to ensure long term species conservation based on scientific assessment of the best information available. As a professional biologist and as an angler, I am well acquainted with the various user groups of the McKenzie River. It is following great consideration that our District proposed this change in the regulations. The proposal is crafted to balance consumptive angling opportunities with the need for fish conservation in the mainstem McKenzie River.

This proposal completes a management strategy that will create three basic zones in the mainstem McKenzie consisting of a large hatchery trout release area (33 river miles) bounded upstream and downstream by wild fish management areas. ODFW recognizes that wild rainbow populations are depressed in the stocked

area and that maintaining robust wild populations above and below the impacted area will provide greater certainty that McKenzie redbside trout will persist indefinitely. The proposed regulation change will also benefit other native fish species, including cutthroat and bull trout.

Additional considerations include:

- Based on my observations and assessment, the area between Hendricks Bridge and Hayden Bridge is the most productive reach for native rainbow trout production in the entire McKenzie Basin. With the proposed change in regulations, ODFW expects to grow and maintain strong populations that will harbor the unique genetic qualities of the McKenzie Redside trout.
- Fish caught and released using bait die at a higher rate (up to ten times higher) than those caught and released using artificial lures or flies. Because this reach is not stocked and all wild fish must be released unharmed, bait use and the associated increased hooking mortality is not consistent with this wild fish management strategy for the lower McKenzie River.
- Allowing only artificial lures and flies would make regulations for the lower McKenzie River consistent with regulations of other trout conservation areas of the state.
- In an effort to maintain opportunity while providing necessary conservation in this area, this proposal allows the retention of hatchery trout, and allows salmon and steelhead anglers to use bait during the peak of these runs.
- The Hayden Bridge to Hendricks Bridge area has very little public bank access. However, it is served by three boat launches (one at the top, one at the bottom and one in the middle) that also provide the majority of the public bank access in this reach. Public bank access at Hendricks Bridge wayside, the uppermost launch, is entirely within the reach that allows bait. Data from the 2009-2010 Upper McKenzie Creel Survey suggest about 90% of McKenzie River boat anglers do not use bait. This includes the areas stocked with hatchery trout. Because of the limited bank access and recent data regarding boat angler gear use on the McKenzie River, we don't believe this regulation change would negatively affect many anglers.

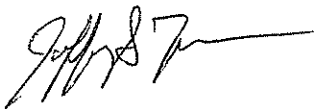
Angling regulation proposals for trout on the McKenzie River have been of high interest to the public and ODFW Commission for the last 4-6 years. As a result of this interest, ODFW has conducted an angler creel on the upper McKenzie River (2009-2010) and an angler preference survey (2009) in the same area. In addition, volunteer-lead native trout population estimates have been developed from Hendricks Wayside to Bellinger Landing (2010 to 2012). Given appropriate review, these information resources can allow us to manage McKenzie River fish populations and angling recreation in a very comprehensive manner.

In response to the statement in your letter that you "have seen no documentation or information that no longer stocking this area has or would result in an increase of native trout", the scientific literature has unequivocally shown hatchery trout released in the presence of wild populations have a deleterious effect upon those wild populations. This is not up for debate. As a fishery manager at ODFW, I am tasked with making science based decisions about where it is acceptable – or unacceptable – to have these impacts. Results of the 2009-2010 creel survey

reflect the science: *catch rates on wild rainbow in the unstocked areas were over ten times greater than those in the stocked areas.* My professional assessment concluded that it was not acceptable to continue this stocking practice for the five mile section of the McKenzie River below Hendricks Bridge

I recognize the City and ODFW may not always approach fish and wildlife issues from the same perspective. The mission of ODFW is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. I feel this regulation proposal stays true to that mission and I have strived to remain transparent and open through the decision process. Regardless of our different viewpoints, I am hopeful the City of Springfield and the local ODFW can continue to work together where our purviews overlap. We are a part of this community and look forward to building our relationship to benefit both the citizens and natural resources for the long term. If you are amenable, it would be great to meet with you this fall to talk about ways to strengthen this relationship and perhaps alleviate potential misinterpretations of intent. Please contact me at 541-726-3515, extension 26.

Sincerely,



Jeff Ziller  
District Fish Biologist  
South Willamette Watershed District  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

- c. Springfield City Councilors  
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commissioners  
Director Roy Elicker  
Ed Bowles  
Rhine Messmer  
Chris Wheaton  
Steve Marx